



## Tax credit for police services needs revision

*January 30, 2019*

Town of Cheektowaga Supervisor Diane Benczkowski recently announced the town would be increasing the police protection service tax credit for the Village of Depew from \$440,000 to \$500,000 for the 2019 fiscal year.

This credit was instituted to credit back residents of Depew for services they were already paying for in the village budget, including the Depew Police Department.

While the credit has increased over the years, the rate of change of credit has not matched the rate of change of the Cheektowaga Police budget.

In 2013, the Cheektowaga Police budget was approximately \$13.3 million. The credit given to Depew residents was \$440,000, or approximately 3.3 percent. The proposed police budget for 2019 is \$15.9 million, while the proposed credit is \$500,000. This is about 3.1 percent of the police budget. As you can see, the rate of change of the police budget is around plus 19.5 percent, while the rate of change of the credit is approximately minus 0.2 percent.

In several meetings and correspondence over the past 22 months with Benczkowski, members of the Depew Tax Reduction Task Force have requested several things regarding the police credit.

First, members have asked for a larger credit, more in proportion with the increase in the Cheektowaga Police budget. In response to this, the supervisor has repeatedly stated that the Depew Police Department "routinely requests the assistance of the Cheektowaga Police Department," justifying a reduced refund.

What Benczkowski refuses to accept is what the CPD is providing is referred to as mutual aid assistance.

The Depew PD provides mutual aid to the CPD on occasion. The CPD routinely assists other police agencies that patrol along the border of Cheektowaga such as the Buffalo, West Seneca, Lancaster and NFTA Police departments. This assistance falls under the principles of mutual aid agreements, and there is no discussion of charging these neighboring departments or requesting financial compensation from them.

Task Force members also requested that the town break down the police budget to show the exact costs Depew residents pay for on their tax bills each year and provide addresses of the exact residents receiving police services from Cheektowaga.

Task Force members were informed by the Cheektowaga director of administration and finance that this “would be a very difficult task” to accomplish.

A final goal of the Tax Relief Task Force is to develop a long-term solution to the issue of over-taxation for police services not utilized by the village residents, similar to the one that exists between the Town of Lancaster and the Village of Depew. Village residents living within the town do not receive police protection from the Lancaster Police Department and do not pay toward the department budget.

As citizens of the Village of Depew, we value our Depew PD and the services its officers and staff provide us. We believe that it is time that others do, as well, and that the appropriate credit be given, by the Town of Cheektowaga, for those services.

**Thomas Wiesmore**

**Village of Depew Tax**

**Relief Task Force**